

# Greater Minnesota REGIONAL PARKS & TRAILS COMMISSION

---

## **Funding Protocol for Regionally Designated Significant Parks and Trails**

Regionally designated parks and trails in Greater Minnesota are eligible to submit funding requests for projects that align with their Master Plan.

The designation process sets a high standard to achieve regional significance, therefore a thorough vetting of potential projects has been done on the front end, ensuring all projects recommended by the Commission for funding are of high regional value.

### Funding Evaluation Protocol

- Funding requests are evaluated on the ability to provide a high-quality experience, serve a regional population or visitor destination, enhance connectivity and/or fill a gap in a recreational opportunity
- The Four Legacy Strategic Directions are given high consideration; connect people to the outdoors; acquire land, create opportunities; take care of what we have; coordinate among partners
- A focus on projects most relevant to, and valued by, residents and visitors, those that generate economic impact and/or complete a park or trail in its entirety.

*All* funding requests submitted for FY18 grants were evaluated based on the Funding Evaluation Protocol. Of 25 total requests, the Commission recommended funding 12 high value requests.

Projects not selected for funding in this cycle will continue to be reviewed and in many instances the Commission will work with those applicants to strengthen and improve their applications for future submissions.

## **Funding Recommendation Process**

Funding application screening was performed by the Executive Director and consultant team based on the funding protocol established. The screening resulted in a consensus of project recommendations to be forwarded to the Commission for discussion, consideration and approval.

# Greater Minnesota REGIONAL PARKS & TRAILS COMMISSION

---

## Designation Protocol for Parks and Trails of Regional Significance

The application process is designed to provide *all* cities and counties in Greater Minnesota an equal opportunity to submit projects for evaluation and ranking. The process ensures consistent evaluations that avoid conflict of interest in ranking and scoring projects.

### STEP 1 – Initial Screening and Baseline Evaluation for Regional Significance

- Application for designation as a regional park or trail by a city or county
- Determination is made by the Evaluation Team on the merit of the application

The purpose of Step 1 is determining whether an application meets the basic requirements for consideration as regionally significant; before resources are invested in a Master Plan for a project that may not be highly scored.

### STEP 2 – Detailed Evaluation and Formal Recognition as a Regionally Significant Park or Trail

- Park or Trail has been ranked High by the Evaluation Team
- Submittal of a Master Plan that meets the requirements set forth by the Commission (Reference page 61 of Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan)
- Scoring of the project and referral to the Commission for consideration of designation

The purpose of Step 2 is rigorous evaluation of a project to ensure it is regionally significant and meets all the criteria for inclusion in the Greater Minnesota System Plan.

## Evaluation Criteria to Achieve Regionally Significant Designation

### Criteria for Parks of Regional Significance

- Natural resource based settings with a range of activities offered
- Regional use that will draw visitors and generate economic impact for the area

Parks of regional significance must also meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Significant in size
- Unique or unusual landscape features, historically or culturally significant sites or characteristics of regional or statewide significance
- Provides natural resource based recreational opportunities not otherwise available in the region

### Criteria for Trails of Regional Significance

- The trail is in a regionally desirable setting
- The trail is a destination that attracts regional users by providing a high quality recreational opportunity

Other factors considered for regional trail designation are length, connections to other parks and/or trails and a lack of other trails in the area.

For a *comprehensive* list of definitions and evaluation criteria, refer to Section 3 in the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan, pages 27-47.